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7-8-08, 7:30
pm

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Council:

My name is Jim Resnick and I reside in Kensington, Maryland.

Speaker# 13

I am pleased to be here representing the Montgomery County Career Fire/Rescue Officers' Association, which is comprised of nearly 60 senior Career Fire and Rescue officers including Division Chiefs, Assistant Chiefs, Battalion Chiefs, Captains and Lieutenants. These are the men and women that provide direction and supervision to many of the Fire/Rescue incidents in Montgomery County. The Montgomery County Career Officers' Association vigorously supports the proposed Emergency Medical Services Transport Fee, also known as Bill 25-08, as offered by County Executive Leggett.

On a daily basis, the members of the Montgomery County Career Fire/Rescue Officers' Association have to work out the issues of making the fire/rescue service in Montgomery County function. Often, this includes having our dedicated, caring and compassionate members dealing with older, outdated fire and rescue apparatus and equipment as well as antiquated stations and facilities. While we "make do" with what we have, we often have to run equipment that should have been retired years ago. As of this evening, in my Battalion we are running a 24 year old pumper truck, a 22 year old pumper truck and a 9 year old ambulance because the front line apparatus is down for corrective repairs or other maintenance. When running reserve apparatus our firefighters, EMTs and Paramedics often lose precious response time while they have to switch over equipment from one piece of apparatus to another.

Some 25 years ago, I was an active volunteer member of one of the fire and rescue departments that is voicing their opposition to the County Executive and Fire Chief's proposal. At that time, we sometimes responded to calls where the patient was waiting for us on their front door step, dressed impeccably and carrying their suitcase. When the EMTs or paramedics asked what the emergency was, we were told that their doctor was waiting for them at a local emergency department and that we were quicker, nicer and cheaper than a taxi cab. In the end, we were professional and nice and we took Mr. or Mrs. Smith to the hospital.

While some things have changed, others remain the same – Our personnel will always respond expeditiously to calls for assistance. Our personnel will be polite and considerate, as well as extremely well trained to handle any type of medical emergency. But nearly everything costs more now, from the cost of the ambulance to the cost of the stretcher to the cost of the defibrillator to the cost of the oxygen tubing and the list goes on and on. Years ago we never would have thought that the hospitals that we transported to would charge for things that were considered "basics". But times have changed and in order to stay solvent, hospitals and other health care facilities are now charging for those. EMS Transport Fees are a similar reality.

The EMS Transport fee is a rational, responsible and equitable way to support the Montgomery County Fire Rescue Service in dealing with these increased costs. EMS Transport fees are not new across the nation, and the experience of other jurisdictions that have had these fees for years was part of the extensive research that was done prior to introducing this proposal. There is no evidence that citizens are not calling 911 in other communities that charge for EMS transport services, or that people are dying in their homes or on the streets as a result of an EMS Transport Fee. The proposed Montgomery County EMS Transport Fee will also support the Volunteer components of the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue – we have the greatest system in the nation and we want to keep it that way!

Our citizens of Montgomery County and other customers of the Montgomery County Fire Rescue Service deserve the best, and the proposed EMS Transport Fee will provide a much needed means to support the service. I urge the Council to adopt Bill 25-08. Thank you.